

BIRD NOTES
by Maurice G. Street,

Black-crowned Night Heron. Last year the colony, numbering 21 nests, nested amongst bulrushes, in 15 to 20 inches of water on Lower Rousay Lake. This year, when the water level of the lake rose nearly two feet, they returned to nest in the bush on an island in Upper Rousay Lake, a few miles away from where they had nested in 1944. At that time there were 26 nests. This year there were 15 nests and they built in chokecherry bushes rather than in willows and poplar as formerly. Unless there is a new colony starting up somewhere in the district, this species would seem to be decreasing in numbers.

Canada Goose. Nest with 6 eggs found on an island at Upper Rousay Lake, June 22, 1947, by C. Stuart Houston. Last year, two nests at this lake, and three at the Rokeby Marsh, all hatched out between May 14 and 17. Another goose with goslings was reported at Upper Rousay Lake before the end of May, so it is believed this late record is a re-nesting, the first nest having been flooded out.

Mallard. The magpie nest, 12 ft. from the ground in willows, 3 miles south of Yorkton, which was occupied by a Mallard last year, was apparently occupied by the same bird this year, and again she was successful in raising a brood. Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw visited this nest and took photos when he visited Yorkton on his way north in search of nests of the Whooping Cranes.

Another female of this species was found nesting in a black poplar, some 18 feet from the ground, at the "Muskeg" just on the edge of Yorkton. This nest contained 8 eggs on June 10, 1947, but had been discovered by some young boys about three weeks previously. All 8 eggs hatched.

White-winged Scoter. This species have been gradually increasing at York Lake since Ducks Unlimited raised the water level in 1943. On July 13, 1947, 46 were noted in one flock. C. S. Houston.

Spruce Grouse. A nest with 9 eggs was found by an employee of the Dept. of Natural Resources at Fishing Lake, some 60 miles north-west of Niwawin, quite by accident when walking along a narrow road - a stick picked up from the road and aimlessly thrown to one side flushed the female from the nest at the base of a small spruce. Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw, when in this area, was shown the nest, which he spent some time in observing. Arriving at the nest site before daylight, June 3, 1947, he found the female off the nest and after a few minutes she returned, flying directly to the nest. The female, then, did not once leave the eggs for the next eight hours, at which time Dr. Walkinshaw was forced to return to his camp.

Burrowing Owl. Nest with five young found in a burrow just across the fence, in an oat field, along Highway 15, 3 miles east of Melville, July 9, 1947, by C.S. Houston. The young were of different sizes, apparently there was a day or two difference in age between each; the eldest being nearly full-grown.

White-winged Crossbill An adult female, picked up dead on the Old Victoria School Grounds, Yorkton, June 7, 1947. The specimen was forwarded to the Provincial Museum. It was the second Yorkton record for this species.

Common Tern. Two noted at York Lake, July 13, 1947, by C. S. Houston. This species is ordinarily noted only in spring and fall migration at Yorkton.

Wilson's Phalarope. What is apparently a northern nesting record of this species was established June 1, 1947, when a nest, containing three eggs, was found some 9 miles north-west of Love, Sask., by a party consisting of Dr. Lawrence H. Walkinshaw, M. G. Street, Billy and Walter Matthews. Several females were also seen about the same slough, which indicates there were probably more nests, as the only male seen was the one flushed from the nest which was found.

Pine Siskin. This species has been very abundant throughout Saskatchewan this spring and summer. Roy Crawford, Saskatoon, reports numbers in the city during migration. Steve Waycheshen, reports them very numerous at High Hill, Sask., while at Nipawin, flocks numbering into the hundreds have been seen since early May. Dave A. Munro, Okanagan Landing, B. C., noted a female gathering nesting material, 11 miles west of Nipawin in early June. Young, just out of the nest, were seen being fed by the parents at Nipawin, July 12, 1947, and other young were noted quite commonly after July 18.

J. F. Roy, Tullis, Sask., noting the Siskins at Tullis writes, "Pine Siskins have been unusually abundant this year and are still being seen in small flocks, July 19. They were first noted in late April and have been more or less regularly seen ever since. They are very occasional here most years."

35 birds were noted on C. Stuart Houston's front lawn August 3, and C. C. Shaw noted a flock of the same size, one block away, five days later.

Cooper's Hawk. A nest with three eggs, discovered by members of the Y.N.H.S., at the Muskeg, on the west side of Yorkton, June 10, 1947. This nest was about 22 ft. from the ground in a poplar. Misfortune befell one of the eggs, as there were only two young birds on July 11, when Stuart Houston banded them.

Black-billed Cuckoo. Wm. Niven reports this species quite common around Sheho until 1944, then was entirely absent during 1945 and 1946. This year he has only one record - one heard on June 27.

Tree Sparrow. Indicative of the general lateness of migration this past spring, 1947, this species was still present at Sheho until the middle of June, so reports Wm. Niven.

Hawks. A heavy flight of migrating hawks occurred at Yorkton, on Thursday, April 17, 1947, between 2:00 and 3:30 p.m. 117 were counted by Cliff Shaw. Due to the great height at which these hawks flew, all could not be identified, but the majority appeared to be Red-Tails.

BIRD NOTES - Continued

"To see a flock of wild Canada geese fly over your head, between the barn and the house and alight on your own pond is really a thrill," so remarks Ralph P. Stueck, who has a small museum and bird sanctuary at Abernethy, Saskatchewan. Two flocks visited the Stueck Sanctuary last fall, 1946, and mingled with his domesticated Canadas. Two mated pair of the wild Canadas remained all winter, to nest this summer under the protection this small sanctuary affords. Photos sent to us by Mr. Stueck showing the Canadas nesting, the young and the adults about the yard is most interesting, and clearly shows what can be done with a few acres of waste land and a will to protect the birds. Mr. Stueck will welcome anyone, that is interested, to visit his sanctuary at Abernethy.

An interesting record of a crow that nested on the ground at Abernethy, Sask., comes from Mr. Ralph P. Stueck, who found the nest during the summer of 1946. The nest was situated on a ridge along a fence, and was built chiefly of long straw and bits of bark off of fence pickets, and lined with "fox-tail grass." This crow raised a brood of five, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the nearest willows that could have supported a nest. The nearest crow neighbor, nesting in the conventional manner, lived one mile away.

Sharp-tailed Grouse. C. R. Coates, Birsay, Sask., reports an Albino grouse of this species, near the Saskatchewan River, in January, 1947.

English Sparrow. On May 18, 1943, M. G. Street, Nipawin, Sask., noted a female feeding fledgling young within one block of the main business section of Nipawin. This sparrow, while acting in true sparrow fashion was easily identified thereafter by its nearly pure white wings; only the longest primary or two were brown. Within the one block area, where first noted, this female was known to have reared at least 8 or more broods; by years as follows: 1943, 2 broods; 1944, 1 brood; 1945, 2 broods and one other attempted nesting; 1946, 2 broods; 1947, up until July, one brood. During this period, the bird being now at least 5 years, was seen almost daily summer and winter in the same section of Nipawin. Only on two occasions, March 24, 1945, and March 10, 1946, was this bird known to have left its home area; when it was seen nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ mile distant near the grain elevators. Only two individuals, of the broods reared, showed any tendency toward albinism. One of these had a large amount of white in the feathers of its back and was seen being fed by the white-winged parent in early May, 1944. The other young, noted August 5, 1946, was almost a replica of the female parent; white wings, but in addition had several white tail feathers and a general grayness in the over-all plumage. This latter young was trapped in a trap used in catching birds for banding, but despite the fact that numerous types of traps were in operation from 1945 on, the white-winged adult female was never taken and as this is written is still being seen, and still appears in the best of health.

Red-breasted Merganser. One pair noted on a small prairie slough, near Tullis, Sask., May 6, 1947, by J. F. Roy.

Solitary Sandpiper. Noted at Waskesiu, by J. F. Roy, who writes: "There were 3 downy young as well as two adults along the lake shore near a river estuary. The old bird flew to the lower limb of an aspen and "harped" at me while I caught one of the little fellows in my hand. When we first came across the Sandpipers, I thought they were the Spotted Sandpipers, so common along the river at Tullis, but a glimpse of their wings and tail, told me that here was something definitely more interesting. Those are the little pleasures in birding that make it so rewarding."

Information is requested from all members concerning the relative abundance of waterfowl in their district. In the Yorkton area sloughs are plentiful, and Pintails, Mallards, Blue-winged Teal and Shovellers are much in evidence. The lakes seem to hold a much lower breeding population than they have during the past few years, however, and the diving ducks are only present in fractions of their former numbers. Redheads have shown the sharpest drop, followed by Canvasbacks and Lesser Scaup. Ruddy Ducks seem present in almost their usual numbers. At Tullis, Sask., information supplied by J. F. Roy, indicates a similar loss among the diving ducks. "Duck populations decreased sharply in 1946 and this year the decrease was again marked over 1946. A couple of large sloughs in the region that normally support hundreds of pair of nesting ducks can boast of only 20 to 50 breeding pair. Canvasbacks are the ducks suffering the greatest loss in numbers. Coteau Lake, a large slough, which in 1943 supported at least 25 pairs of Canvasbacks this year have only 3 or 4 pairs. Of considerable interest is the way the Shovellers have maintained, or even increased, in numbers in the past few years in this area, so writes Mr. Roy. Ducks Unlimited report an increase in duck breeding population in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, with a decrease in Manitoba and the northern prairies.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN (Pinnated Grouse.) Three birds of this species were noted by W. D. Lightbody, in early November 1946, on the grassy flats between Otthon and Rousay Lake. This species appears to be steadily decreasing, for it disappeared from much of the Yorkton District, 15 to 20 years ago. Local sportsmen, well acquainted with this species, report that it was noted occasionally though in decreasing numbers on the Saltcoats and Otthon Flats up until about four years ago. At Nipawin, the Pinnated Grouse is of only a rare occurrence, so it was something of a record when J. P. Maywood, while doing field work on his farm, 4 miles SW of Nipawin, June 22, 1947, accidentally ran over a nest of this species, containing 14 eggs. Oddly enough, none of the eggs were broken, so Mr. Maywood moved the entire nest some 5 or 6 ft. to new cover, to which the female immediately returned and succeeded in hatching all of the 14 eggs. On July 18, M. G. Street was fortunate in flushing a female with 7 young about one mile north of the site where Mr. Maywood found the nest.

J. Francis Roy, Tullis, Sask., reports that Vesper Sparrows and Chestnut collared longspurs are definitely scarcer in his district this year. Does this apply to any other part of the Province?

.....

It would be greatly appreciated if our members would send in their reports more regularly. The "Blue Jay" depends on your observations.